



MARKETING PLAN

Every time you speak to someone about your business you are involved in marketing. Any conversation about your firm is an opportunity to promote your business and increase sales.

A marketing plan sets out how you are going to put your marketing strategy into practice. The marketing plan ensures that everyone in the business knows what you are trying to do and what they need to do to make it happen. A marketing plan is a business's operational document for advertising campaigns designed to reach its target market, with additional information on how they will be measured and monitored.

The marketing plan interacts with other business operations in several ways, including:

- Providing market research to support pricing decisions and new market entries.
- Tailoring the main messages to different demographics and geographic areas.
- Selecting the platforms for promoting the product or services - digital, radio, internet, trade magazine, etc. - and the mix of those platforms for each campaign.
- Setting up the success metrics and the results reporting timelines.



The next step is to create a detailed marketing plan that sets out the specific actions to put your marketing strategy into practice. A good strategy to start with is to ask lots of questions, like:

- What changes are taking place in our business environment?
- Are these opportunities or threats?
- What do I want to achieve? Set clear, realistic objectives.
- What are customers looking for? What are their needs?
- Which customers are the most profitable?
- How will I target the right potential customers? Are there groups that I can target effectively?
- What's the best way of communicating with them?
- How could I improve my customer service? This can be a low-cost way of gaining a competitive advantage over rivals, keeping customers, boosting sales and building a good reputation.
- Could changing my products or services increase sales and profitability? Most products need to be continuously updated to maintain competitiveness.
- Could extending my product list or service provision meet existing customers' needs more effectively? Remember that selling to existing customers is generally more cost effective than continually trying to find new ones.
- How will I price my product or service? Although prices need to be competitive, most businesses find that trying to compete on price alone is a poor strategy. What else are my customers interested in? Quality? Reliability? Efficiency? Value for money?
- What is the best way of distributing and selling my products?
- How can I best promote my products? Options might include advertising, direct marketing, exhibiting at trade fairs, PR or marketing on the web.
- How can I tell if my marketing is effective? Check how your customers find out about your business. A small-scale trial can be a good way of testing a marketing strategy without committing to excessive costs.



Key Tasks

- Analyse the different needs of different groups of customers.
- Focus on a market niche where you can be the best.
- Aim to put most of your efforts into the 20 per cent of customers who provide 80 per cent of profits. Don't forget the follow-up.
- Approach a third party for feedback about your strategy - they may be able to spot any gaps or weaknesses that you can't see.
- Put your marketing strategy into effect with a marketing plan that sets out the aims, actions, dates, costs, resources and effective selling programmes.
- Measure the effectiveness of what you do. Be prepared to change things that aren't working.

Pitfalls to avoid

There are many pitfalls that you need to avoid in order to create a successful marketing plan, the most important of them are:

- Making assumptions about what customers want.
- Ignoring the competition.
- Trying to compete on price alone.
- Relying on too few customers.
- Trying to grow too quickly.
- Becoming complacent about what you offer and failing to innovate.



How to launch a successful marketing campaign

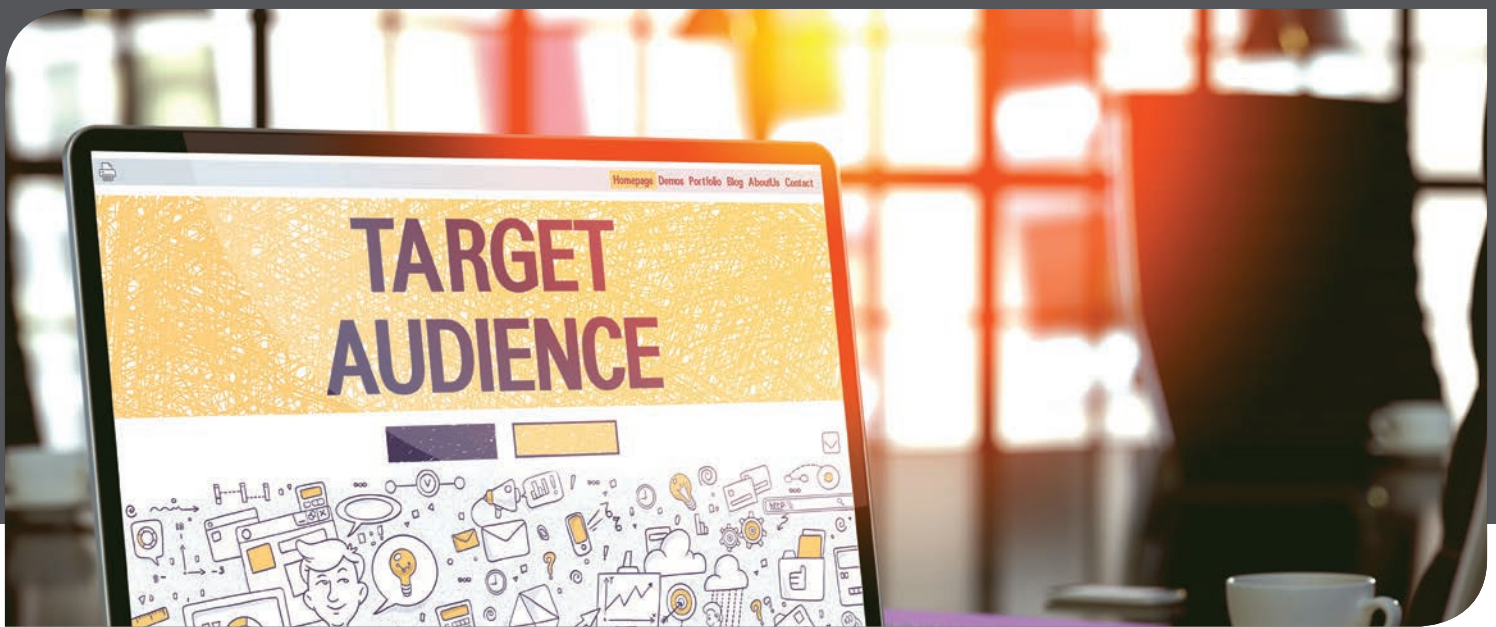
To implement your marketing plan, you need a complete system for each marketing initiative that ensures its success. Whether you are implementing a lead generation, content marketing or an email marketing campaign, each one needs to have its own action plan that drives its execution and ultimately a significant return on your marketing investment. Talking about Marketing Plans is simply not enough, what is important is what actions are required to turn your Marketing Plan into individual campaigns that drive growth in revenue.

Marketing Plan vs Marketing Campaign

A marketing plan provides high level strategy you have developed through the business objectives, over a period of time.

A marketing campaign, on the other hand, is tactical initiative used to achieve a specific marketing goal. Implementing a marketing campaign is a step by step process to ensure you execute precisely what you hand planned and ensures that all resources employed are successful, that the outcome is measured and you achieve a return on your marketing investment.

- A marketing plan provides an overall, high level strategy based on the business's objectives over a period of time.
- A marketing campaign is a focused, tactical initiative to achieve a specific marketing goal.



The Anatomy of a Marketing Campaign

Marketing activities require careful planning and execution so that every step is understood before you launch. A marketing campaign is a tactical, project based task. Therefore you must map out the process from the initial concept, marketing goals and tactics right through to the ultimate outcome and desired result.

- Pick your target audience: Who are you interested in attracting?
- Set your goals and KPIs: What do you want to accomplish with this campaign and how will you measure performance?
- Determine your offer: What incentive will get their attention?
- Identify your channel: What media channels will you use to promote this offer?
- Create a call to action: How will you get the visitor to take action?
- Nurture the lead and treat it with respect: How do you help your visitors with their buying journey?
- Track and measure results: How will you measure success?

Pick Your Target Audience

Before you can decide what and where you are marketing to, you first need to determine who your target audience is, and how you can reach them. Some of this can be learnt by closely examining your competitors and how they reach your clients.

There will be unique challenges for each of the customer groups in need of your products and services. The ability to develop a campaign that fits across all of your customers is a challenge that when conquered will pay big dividends.

Understanding your client's personalities and quirky needs takes time and knowledge, so look, listen and learn.



Setting your Goals and KPI's

Key Performance Indicators or KPI's are a set of specific goals or targets you determine to ensure your campaign is performing against that goal and are critical in knowing if your campaign is successful in delivering the message to your customers.

It is important to track your results and measure the performance of your marketing activities. In most cases results can be measured in terms of leads generated, increase in sales or brand recognition. In simple terms:

- Did you meet the goals? If not, why?
- Did your offer satisfy your target audience? If not, what can you offer that will?
- Should anything change next time you run the campaign?
- What did you learn that you can apply to your next campaign for this audience persona?

Determine Your Offer

Depending on the campaign, your offer could be a free sample, webinar, a free no obligations business health check - something that might attract a customer to buy into your brand. These offers need to resonate with where your target group is on their buying journey in order to get their attention. Offering a free sample to someone who doesn't have that specific need is likely to lead to a waste of time and money. Introduce your brand by aligning your offer with something you know your target customer needs or desires.

Identify Your Channel

Which channels should you use to communicate and what message should you use to capture your target audience?

- Websites
- Social media
- Email
- Mobile
- Print or Television
- Search engines
- Youtube Video

The 'channel' is simply a means of communication. The channel or channels you choose will depend on the product or service we are offering at the time and understanding how our target audience interact with each or all of the channels.



Creating Your Optimised Landing Page

Marketing campaigns are developed with a specific goal in mind. To create awareness, generate leads or sell a product or service. When visitors arrive at your website from a marketing campaign, you have more control over where they land and the specific call to action that you want them to take.

Your ad, whether it is Facebook or Google AdWords, piques your target audience's interest and makes a compelling offer. When someone clicks on your ad, the job of the landing page is to continue the journey, from stranger to acquaintance to lead.

To do this, you need to make sure your landing page aligns with the ad in both content and design so that your visitor makes the connection and feels compelled to click on your call to action. Make the benefit of clicking the button clear and worthwhile. If the benefit isn't clear to them, why bother click on the offer?

A landing page is where you would like your customers to be directed to in the first instance and where they should land when there is a call to action.

Never ever land your customers on your homepage when you are executing a marketing campaign – ever!

When you are paying for advertising you need to create a landing site, or a specific page for your customer to land for each campaign so that clutter and white noise are removed and you direct them exactly where you want them to go. You must make sure your landing page aligns with content of your ad and that the design makes a connection with your customer. They should feel compelled to sign up for your offer.

Your landing page needs to:

- Overcome objections
- Build trust
- Provide proof
- Clearly lead the visitor to your call to action

Keep it simple and try not to confuse your visitor with too many options details, forms to complete or links that direct them away from your site.